

## Talking Points for Giving Testimony on Amendments to Oregon Smoke Management Plan and the Oregon State Implementation Plan for Air Quality OAR 340-200-0040

Beyond Toxics states for the record our concern with many of the amendments proposed to Smoke Management Rules under OAR 629-048 and Operational Guidance for the Oregon Smoke Management Program.

We object to these aspects of the proposed rule changes:

1. Increasing levels of smoke pollution allowed to enter the airshed of rural and urban communities;
2. Failure to protect children and other vulnerable Oregonians, as well as introducing hardship and economic inequities onto rural and lower income communities;
3. Failure to justify the need to increase burning to remove timber waste on private industrial timber holdings;
4. Failure to align the air quality decisions within the Smoke Management Plan with the DEQ and OHA's goals and rules for Cleaner Air Oregon.

Smoke from both controlled fires and wild fires contain fine particles that can be inhaled into the deepest recesses of the lung and exchanged directly across cell membranes to enter the bloodstream. Thus, small particles can be respiratory irritants as well as posing dangers to the cardiovascular system in the form of strokes and heart attacks. It is well known that fine particles in the PM 2.5 spectrum or smaller represent a greater health concern than larger particles. According to the US EPA, smoke is a complex mixture of carbon dioxide, water vapor, carbon monoxide, particulate matter, hydrocarbons and other organic chemicals, nitrogen oxides, and trace minerals. The individual compounds present in smoke number in the thousands. Small, fine particulate matter (PM 2.5) is the principal pollutant of concern from wildfire smoke for the relatively short-term exposures (hours to days to weeks) that presents risks of negative public health impacts. Air toxics and particulate matter contribute to poor air quality in general, which in turn impacts public health and livability.

The proposed amendments are inadequate to protect public health in the following ways:

1. **Fine Particulate Pollution:** The Smoke Management rule would place Oregonians in harm's way by legalizing unhealthy levels of smoke intrusions into residential areas.
2. **Fails to Align with Cleaner Air Oregon.** Proposed changes to the Smoke Management Plan are in opposition to DEQ's and OHA's efforts to reduce exposure to harmful air pollutants through the Cleaner Air Oregon process. ODF and DEQ must not circumvent the purpose and goals of Cleaner Air Oregon by allowing higher levels of air toxics caused by intentional burning, particularly in rural communities that are located near forest land.
3. **Inadequate Science and Rationale to Justify the Rule Change.** It is clear from the proposed language that the amended rules primarily benefit industrial timber land owners and do not promote ecosystem health. The rules are related to landing or right-of-way piles and burning of slash piles. Slash piles, the result of commercial logging, are not a natural build-up of woody fuels that could start a forest fire. Enabling more logging waste burning is not a compelling reason to place communities at risk for smoke inhalation.

4. **Fails to Protect Children's Health.** The proposed rule changes are particularly harmful to children living in rural areas. There is nothing in this plan to protect young children and school children from exposure to dangerous levels of fine particulate and general poor air quality from smoke intrusions. It is very troubling that the proposed rules seem to ignore the evidence of respiratory vulnerability of children, the elderly or infirmed, and pregnant women. Children, even those without any pre-existing or chronic conditions, are considered a sensitive population because their lungs are still developing, making them susceptible to air pollution. We object to the absence of regulatory language to protect the health of children and health-vulnerable adults.
5. **Community Response Plan and Exemption Request.** Communities should not have to go into emergency mode in response to polluting actions by private timber corporations or state agencies. The US EPA states that even sheltering at home is not a fully successful means of avoiding smoky air. "Staying indoors works best in a tightly closed, air-conditioned home in which the air conditioner re-circulates indoor air ... newer homes are "tighter" and keep ambient air pollution out more effectively than older homes." For communities with older homes and without air conditioning, the US EPA states that indoor concentrations of fine particles can approach 70 to 100 percent of the outdoor levels." In very leaky homes and buildings, outdoor particles can easily infiltrate indoors, so that staying inside may offer little protection. It follows that, in poorer rural communities with older homes, sheltering indoors is not helpful, which may constitute inequities and greater health impacts.

In summary, we urge the DEQ and the EQC to require stricter smoke management rules that increase public health protections. We are concerned that these rules increase air pollution but do not actually reduce wildfire risk.

